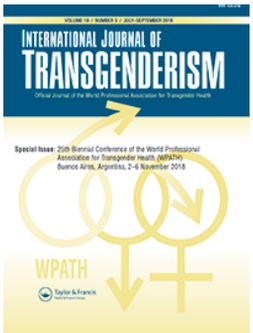

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# Identity recognition statement of the world professional association for transgender health (WPATH)

Gail Knudson[a], Jamison Green[b], Vin Tangpricha[c], Randi Ettner[d], Walter Pierre Bouman[e], Tamara Adrian[f], Luke Allen[g], Griet De Cuypere[h], Lin Fraser[i], Tone Marie Hansen[j], Dan Karasic[k], Baudewijntje P. C. Kreukels[l], Katherine Rachlin[m], Loren Schechter[n], and Sam Winter[o] on behalf of the WPATH Executive Committee and Board of Directors

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In 2010, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) released a statement declaring the Association's opposition to surgery or sterilization as requirements to change legal gender. Over time, the Association's leadership became increasingly conscious of the necessity to address other government barriers preventing trans people from having congruent identity documents.[1] Such barriers are harmful to trans people's health because they make social transition more difficult, put congruent identity documents out of the reach of many, and even contribute to trans people's vulnerability to discrimination and violence. These barriers are at odds with WPATH's perspectives expressed in our Standards of Care (Coleman et al., 2012) and in our letters advising civil society groups and governments, which WPATH has issued in response to requests for policy advice.

Recognizing the limitations of the 2010 statement in addressing barriers to legal gender recognition, in 2015 a revised statement asserted, among other factors, that legitimate documents matching self-identity are essential to the ability of all people to find employment, to navigate everyday transactions, to obtain health care, and to travel safely; transgender, transsexual, or gender-nonconforming status should not preclude individuals from enjoying the legal recognition all citizens expect and deserve. The statement asserted that the right to legal gender recognition should not be based on diagnosis or treatment, and should be extended to minors, to those who are institutionalized, and to nonbinary individuals, and that marital status should not affect this right. The statement urged governments to lower barriers to make legal gender change a simple and accessible administrative procedure.

On November 15, 2017, WPATH released a new Identity Recognition Statement identifying other barriers to gender recognition and emphasizing self-determination as the critical principle in the right to legal gender change. This latest iteration, reproduced below, is the most comprehensive version yet. If readers can identify additional considerations that should be incorporated into a future revision, please communicate those items to wpath@wpath.org.

## WPATH identity recognition statement

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) recognizes that, for optimal physical and mental health, persons must be able to freely express their gender identity, whether or not that identity conforms to the expectations of others. WPATH further recognizes the right of all people to identity documents consistent with their gender identity, including those documents which confer legal gender status. Such documents are essential to the ability of all people to enjoy rights and opportunities equal to those available to others; to access accommodation, education, employment, and health care; to

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travel; to navigate everyday transactions; and to enjoy safety. Transgender people, regardless of how they identify or appear, should enjoy the gender recognition all persons expect and deserve.

Medical and other barriers to gender recognition for transgender individuals may harm physical and mental health. WPATH opposes all medical requirements that act as barriers to those wishing to change legal sex or gender markers on documents. These include requirements for diagnosis, counseling or therapy, puberty blockers, hormones, any form of surgery (including that which involves sterilization), or any other requirements for any form of clinical treatment or letters from doctors. WPATH argues that marital and parental status should not be barriers to recognition of gender change, and opposes requirements for persons to undergo periods living in their affirmed gender, or for enforced waiting or 'cooling off' periods after applying for a change in documents. Further, court and judicial hearings can produce psychological, as well as financial and logistical barriers to legal gender change, and may also violate personal privacy rights or needs.

WPATH advocates that appropriate gender recognition should be available to transgender youth, including those who are under the age of majority, as well as to individuals who are incarcerated or institutionalized. WPATH recognizes that there is a spectrum of gender identities, and that choices of identity limited to Male or Female may be inadequate to reflect all gender identities. An option of X, NB (non-binary), or Other (as examples) should be available for individuals who so choose. WPATH urges governments to eliminate barriers to gender recognition, and to institute transparent, affordable and otherwise accessible administrative procedures affirming self-determination, when gender markers on identity documents are considered necessary. These procedures should be based in law and protect privacy.

## Note

1. We recognize that there are many ways people may express and define their gender identities and gender expressions across the world and over time and that term trans may not be sufficient to capture all identities and experiences. Here, "we use the term trans to include a very broad and all-encompassing understanding of the diverse trans communities, i.e. communities of people with gender expressions and gender identities that differ from the sex recorded at birth, including nonbinary people" (Bouman et al., 2017, p. 6,).

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